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PRODUCTION OF EDIBLE PRODUCTS

Modtaget

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the preparation of an edible product from raw materials comprising starch and water by heating, cooling, holding and drying.

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The preparation of some starch-based food products includes a holding step (sometimes known as tempering or ageing) intended to make the starch retrograde sufficiently to make the product acceptable for further processing. This may typically involve holding from 10 to 48 hours at room temperature.

10 An example is the production of certain snack products (sometimes called third-generation or 3G snacks) in a process including extrusion cooking, followed by cooling, holding and drying to make snack pellets which are expanded by heating (e.g. by frying in oil) to make the final snack product.

Another example is shredded cereals made by cooking whole grain (particularly
15 wheat), followed by cooling, tempering, shredding, forming into biscuits and baking.

The ageing step is by nature a time and space consuming step, and a shortening of this step will give significant advantages to manufactures such as the possibility of reducing floor and rack space or increase production.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The inventors have found that the addition of an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme to starch-based raw materials accelerates the retrogradation and thus allows a shortening of the holding period.

Accordingly, the invention provides a process for producing an edible product, comprising the following sequential steps:

- 25 a) mixing an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme with raw materials comprising starch,
b) heating so as to gelatinize the starch,
c) cooling,
d) holding to effect retrogradation of the starch, and
30 e) heating.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Food product

The food product may be snack pellets, a snack product (e.g. a third-generation snack), or shredded cereal (e.g. shredded wheat) for use as a breakfast cereal.

5 Snack pellets and products

According to the invention, snack pellets may be produced by a process comprising the following sequential steps:

- a) mixing an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme with raw materials comprising starch,
- 10 b) extruding and heating the mixture so as to gelatinize the starch,
- c) cooling and holding to effect retrogradation of the starch, and
- d) heating and drying.

The raw material mixture typically contains up to 32 % water (e.g. 20-32 %), and may optionally be preconditioned by heating, e.g. up to 95°C for 20-240 seconds.

- 15 The extrusion cooking may be done in a single-screw or double-screw extruder with a residence time of 30-90 seconds. The extruder will typically comprise a cooking zone at 80-150°C and a forming zone at 65-90°C. After the extrusion with heating, the mixture will be formed into long rods, typically having a temperature of 60-100 °C (particularly 70-95°C) and a moisture content of 25-30 % or 20-28 %. The holding (also termed aging) may take 8-24 hours
- 20 (particularly 10-16 hours). Before or during the holding, the rods will be cooled, typically to 15-30°C. The holding serves to affect at least partial retrogradation of the starch, either of the amylose component, the amylopectin component or both. Advantageously, the endo-amylase or debranching enzyme added according to the invention accelerates the retrogradation, so the holding time may be shortened. The end-point is conventionally determined by testing the hard-
- 25 ness and brittleness of the pellets.

After ageing the rods are cut into pellets.

The drying of the pellets may be done at 70-95°C for 1-3 hours to reach an exit moisture of 6-8 % in the snack pellets.

- The dried snack pellets may be stored or distributed to a snack processor. The snack
- 30 pellets may then be expanded by heating , e.g. by frying in oil or puffing in hot air or in microwave or infrared oven.

Shredded cereals

According to the invention, shredded cereals may be produced by a process comprising the following sequential steps:

- a) mixing an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme with raw materials comprising starch,
- b) cooking so as to gelatinize the starch,
- c) cooling and holding to effect retrogradation of the starch,
- 5 e) shredding, and
- f) baking.

Shredded cereals may be made by cooking whole grain, followed by cooling, tempering, shredding, forming into biscuits and baking.

The whole grain may be wheat (e.g. white wheat), rice or corn. The cooking may be
10 done for 30-35 minutes at atmospheric pressure or 2000 hPa to reach 45-50 % moisture after removal of excess water. The holding (or tempering) may take 8-28 hours with cooling to 15-30°C. After shredding, the shreds may be stacked to make a biscuit, and this may be baked at 200-315°C to around 4 % end moisture.

Endo-amylase or debranching enzyme

15 The invention uses an enzyme which is an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme. The enzyme may suitably have a pH optimum in the range ?-?. 5-9

The enzyme may suitably have a temperature optimum in the presence of starch in the range of 30-90°C, preferably 50-80°C, particularly 55-75°C, e.g. 60-70°C. The temperature optimum may be measured in a 1 % solution of soluble starch at pH 5.5.

20 The enzyme is typically used at a dosage of 0.1-20 mg enzyme protein per kg of dry solids in the raw material, particularly 0.5-5 mg/kg.

The endo-amylase may be any enzyme that can hydrolyze alpha-1,4 bonds in amylose in an endo-manner (i.e. in the interior of the molecule). Examples of endo-amylases are alpha-amylase (EC 3.2.1.1) and maltogenic alpha-amylase (EC 3.2.1.133). The alpha-amylase may
25 be derived from *Bacillus*, particularly *B. licheniformis* or *B. amyloliquefaciens*. The alpha-amylase may be used at a dosage of 1-100 KNU/kg raw material, e.g. 5-20 KNU/kg. The KNU (Kilo Novo Unit) for amylase activity is defined in WO 96/33267.

The maltogenic alpha-amylase may be derived from *B. stearothermophilus*, e.g. strain NCIB 11837 described in EP 120693, or it may be a variant described in US 6162628. The maltogenic alpha-amylase is typically used at a dosage of 20-5000 MANU per kg of dry solids in the
30 raw materials, particularly 100-1000 MANU/kg. The MANU unit is defined in US 6197352 B1.

The debranching enzyme may be any enzyme that can hydrolyze alpha-1,6 bonds in amylopectin. Examples are pullulanase (EC 3.2.1.41) and iso-amylase (EC 3.2.1.68).

The pullulanase may be derived from a strain of *Bacillus*, in particular *B. naganensis* or
35 *B. acidopullulyticus*, a strain of *Clostridium*, in particular *C. thermosulphurogenes* or *C. thermosulphuricum*, or a strain of *Pyrococcus*, in particular *P. woesei* or *P. furiosus*.

The isoamylase may be derived from a strain of *Flavobacterium*, in particular *F. odoratum*, from *Sulfolobus*, in particular *S. acidocaldarius* or *S. acidocaldarius*, or from a strain of *Rhodethermus*, in particular *R. marinus*.

EXAMPLES

5 Example 1: Use of endo-amylase in production of rod type snack pellets

Rod-type snack pellets were produced with addition of endo-amylase. The endo-amylase tested was a thermostable variant of a maltogenic alpha-amylase from *Bacillus*, described in US 6162628 at a dosage of 1000 MANU/kg of raw material. A control was made without addition of endo-amylase.

10 The following raw materials were mixed: Potato starch, wheat flour, maize flour, potato granules, salt, paprika, vegetable oil, emulsifier and flavouring.

The raw materials were treated by pre-conditioning at 20 - 95°C for 1-2 minutes followed by extrusion at 80 -150°C for 30-90 seconds, and forming at 65- 90°C into long rods.

After forming the rods were placed on racks and stored 16-24 hours before cutting. At
15 the start of ageing the rods were rubber like and did not break when bended. A simple bending test was performed several times during storage, and the rods were judged to be ready for cutting when they readily broke at the bend point when bended.

Finally, the rods were cut and expanded by deep-frying in palm oil at 180°C for 9 - 11 seconds.

20 The results were that the rods made with the endo-amylase were ready after 18-19 hours whereas the control without endo-amylase was ready after 24 hours. The expanded pellets from the enzyme trials did not show any significant differences compared to the reference on physical parameters.

Example 2: Effect on snack texture

25 Snack pellets were produced according to a sheeted pellet procedure with addition of three different endo-amylases.

The following raw materials were mixed: Potato granules, glucose, salt, vegetable oil, mono- and diglycerides as emulsifiers, and dicalciumphosphate.

The raw materials were treated by preconditioning at 20-80°C for 1-2 minutes, followed
30 by extrusion at 80-130°C for 30-45 seconds, forming (sheeting) and drying of the single pellets.

The pellets were allowed to rest for at least 24 hours to assure optimal water migration, before expansion. Expansion was done in palm oil at approximately 180°C for 9-11 seconds.

The texture was judged by a panel of 4 persons. The endo-amylase and dosage used and the observed effect were as follows:

Enzyme	Dosage/kg raw material	Effect
<i>B. stearothermophilus</i> maltogenic alpha-amylase	10000 MANU	Sample was more brown than reference. Some off flavour (maillard reaction).
Thermostable maltogenic alpha-amylase variant	500 MANU	Very crispy, brittle.
	1000 MANU	Very crispy, brittleness more distinct at higher dosages
<i>B. licheniformis</i> alpha-amylase	12 KNU(T)	Very firm surface.

All the enzyme-treated products looked nicer than the reference with fewer, smaller
5 and better distributed air bubbles after expansion.

CLAIMS

1. A process for producing an edible product, comprising the following sequential steps:
 - a) mixing an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme with raw materials comprising starch,
 - 5 b) heating so as to gelatinize the starch,
 - c) cooling and holding to effect retrogradation of the starch, and
 - d) heating and drying.
2. The process of the preceding claim which further comprises a subsequent heat treatment.
3. The process of either preceding claim wherein the edible product is a snack food or a break-
10 fast cereal.
4. A process for producing snack pellets, comprising the following sequential steps:
 - a) mixing an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme with raw materials comprising starch,
 - b) heating and extruding the mixture so as to gelatinize the starch and form pellets,
 - 15 c) cooling and holding to effect retrogradation of the starch,
 - d) heating and drying.
5. The process of the preceding claim which further comprises a heating step prior to the extrusion.
6. A process for producing a snack product comprising
 - 20 a) producing snack pellets by the process of any preceding claim, followed by
 - b) heat treating the pellets, particularly by frying in oil, puffing in hot air, microwave or infrared oven.
7. A process for producing shredded cereals, comprising the following sequential steps:
 - 25 a) mixing an endo-amylase or a debranching enzyme with raw materials comprising starch,
 - b) cooking so as to gelatinize the starch,
 - c) cooling,
 - d) holding to effect retrogradation of the starch, and
 - e) shredding, and
 - 30 f) baking.